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Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations: cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe; cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Human rights questions: comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

Letter dated 22 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Dubrovnik Conclusions of the International Conference on Human Rights and Democratization which was recently convened in Dubrovnik, Croatia, from 8 to 10 October 2001. The Dubrovnik Conclusions were adopted by representatives of Governments in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, together with representatives of the United Nations system, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and national human rights institutions (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 21 (c) and (i) and 119 (d).

(*Signed*) Ivan **Šimonović**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 22 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Dubrovnik Conclusions

Representatives of Governments in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus participating, together with representatives of the United Nations system, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, national human rights institutions as well as members of civil society attending as observers, in the International Conference on Human Rights and Democratization, held at Dubrovnik, Croatia, from 8 to 10 October 2001:

I. Preamble:

Reaffirming the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and inter-relation of all human rights — civil and political, and economic, social, and cultural rights, including the right to development,

Reaffirming that the observance and full exercise of human rights are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace,

Calling on all countries to sign and ratify core human rights instruments, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as their optional protocols,

Recalling the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which identified steps whereby States would improve the promotion and protection of human rights, the results of the World Conference against Racism in Durban as well as other relevant world conferences,

Recognizing the importance of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and other human rights regional instruments elaborated within the Council of Europe, such as the European Social Charter,

Recognize the importance of the Helsinki Final Act and the full corpus of subsequent Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe human dimension commitments,

Recalling resolution 2000/47 of the Commission on Human Rights and resolution 55/96 of the General Assembly on promoting and consolidating democracy,

Stressing the rule of law and democracy as fundamental values that are essential to the protection and promotion of human rights and reaffirming that pluralistic democracies based on the rule of law and respect for human rights are a component of and a prerequisite for comprehensive security,

Recognizing the fundamental importance of human rights, democracy and the rule of law for economic development,

Reaffirming that democracy and human rights are universal values not dependent on any particular religious beliefs or ethnic heritage,

Recognizing the importance of the role of non-governmental organizations and other actors of the civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights and, that democracy has as its foundation respect for the human person and the rule of law,

Recognizing that diversity coexists with common and shared values and goals in such a vast region and that freedom, justice, democracy, gender equality, development and security are based on guaranteed equality before the law for all persons,

Recognizing the importance of the effective protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to minorities at national and international level through instruments such as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as well as recognize the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities,

Recognizing the importance and contribution of national action plans for the promotion and protection of human rights and of national human rights institutions in the region as recommended by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,

Mindful of the importance of human rights education as an effective strategy for the prevention of human rights violations and for creating a culture of peace, tolerance and human rights in this region,

Recognizing the importance of regional cooperation and regional approaches in the field of human rights, including the exchanging of experiences for the strengthening of national human rights capacities for the promotion and protection of human rights,

Acknowledging the fundamental role of the regional organizations — the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union, and regional and country programmes of such United Nations system agencies as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Development Fund for Women — in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus,

II. Operative text

Express appreciation to the Government of Croatia for hosting this International Conference on Human Rights and Democratization in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus; to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Commission for their role in the organization and the conduct of the Conference; and to the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for their contribution to the Conference;

Commend the discussions held during the Conference on:

- Democratization and the development of the civil society for the promotion and protection of human rights;

- Multiculturalism, tolerance and the protection of minorities for the full enjoyment of human rights;
- National plans of action, independent national human rights institutions and human rights education for the promotion and protection of human rights and the strengthening of national human rights capacities; and
- Multilateral regional cooperation for the promotion and the protection of human rights;

Reaffirm our commitments contained in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action with respect to Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, and underline in particular the fundamental role of democracy and the development of civil society for the promotion and the protection of human rights in the region;

Renew our commitment to democracy as the only legitimate form of Government in the region and pledge to strengthen the rule of law and enhance good governance as an important element in the promotion and protection of human rights;

Affirm that effective and meaningful public participation of civil society, including international and national non-governmental organizations and the private sector, is an essential component of successful and sustainable social and economic development and an important element for the promotion of human rights;

Recognize the important contribution of human rights defenders in consolidating democracy, the rule of law and in the promotion and protection of human rights and support the efforts and activities of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders;

Recognize that the principles of equality before the law and non-discrimination are at the heart of human rights and reiterate the obligation to combat discrimination in accordance with international and regional human rights instruments;

Confirm the determination to ensure equal rights of women and men, and to promote equal participation of women and men in political, economic, social and cultural life as well as to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and a policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes;

Stress the crucial importance of combating all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and recall the significant role the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance can play in this respect and, express support to the process of European follow-up to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to be initiated in the framework of the Council of Europe;

Acknowledge the contribution of democracy and human rights to comprehensive security in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus and therefore integrate human rights and the rule of law as a regular component in peacekeeping and peace-building operations;

Recall that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action emphasized that the acts, methods and practices of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations are activities aimed at the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy, and by prompting that the international community should take the necessary steps to prevent and combat terrorism;

Express condemnation at the 11 September 2001 events which constituted a crime against humanity and call upon all States to implement the relevant United Nations Security Council resolution and to maintain open pluralistic societies and to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the legitimate fight against terrorism;

Recognize the particular plight of refugees and internally displaced persons in the region, and reaffirm the importance of the rights of refugees to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution in other countries and their right to return to their homes in dignity and security and call upon all States to implement the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in their domestic system;

Reiterate our firm conviction that torture is unacceptable under any circumstances and commit to intensify our efforts to create a torture-free region in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus and call upon States to ratify the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Council of Europe Convention for the Prevention of Torture and incorporate into their national legislation and practices all steps necessary to achieve this goal;

Reiterate our commitment to combat trafficking in persons, particularly for sexual exploitation and undertake to ratify the Protocol to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Affirm our commitment to both drawing up and implementing national plans of action, ensuring that human rights considerations shall be at the core of an integrated strategy to combat the problem;

Welcome the commitment by the European Union and the Council of Europe to secure the universal abolition of the death penalty;

Affirm our determination to protect and promote the rights of the child and to fully implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; to combat all forms of violence, discrimination or exploitation, such as the sale of children, child pornography, child prostitution, child soldiers and war-affected children and to implement the Berlin Commitment approved by the May 2001 Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia;

Acknowledge the positive aspects of cultural diversity and reaffirm the commitment to respect multiculturalism while assuring our commitment to human rights through, inter alia, the promotion of tolerance, openness and human rights education;

Recognize that the effective protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to minorities is a fundamental part of the promotion and protection of human rights within democratic societies and therefore further consolidation and development of minority protection mechanisms at the global, regional and subregional levels is desirable;

Recognize the importance of developing and strengthening national capacities for the promotion and protection of human rights, such as independent national human rights institutions, including non-judicial mechanisms for the protection of human rights and in accordance with national conditions and benefiting from regional cooperation and the sharing of experiences;

Recognize the desirability of developing and implementing national human rights plans of action as well as human rights education plans of action, in accordance with their national priorities and through a process of consultation with national entities, as well as the desirability to follow up on treaty-based obligations and the implementation of recommendations of the international treaty-monitoring bodies and the other mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights;

Recognize the important role of the regional human rights mechanisms and the unique contribution to the promotion and the protection of human rights, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus made by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and other regional organizations;

Call upon the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union and United Nations regional and country teams to develop more effective cooperation in the promotion and the protection of human rights in the region, and to increase the sharing of experiences and best practices as well as the implementation, where possible, of joint projects;

Encourage the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and regional organizations to take part in the enhancement of partnerships between Governments and civil society for the promotion and protection of human rights;

Welcome the commitment by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to contribute through her technical cooperation programme to the development and strengthening of national capacities for the promotion and protection of human rights in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus;

Welcome the call by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for regular exchange of information to share different national experiences and lessons learned as well as to identify best practices and review progress at the regional, subregional and national levels in relation to, in particular:

- National human rights action plans;
- National human rights institutions;
- Human rights education; and
- Follow-up to recommendations of treaty bodies and mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights;

Encourage the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to discuss the modalities of such exchanges; and to enhance their cooperation in the field of human rights and democratization with a view to making activities more effective, avoid duplications and identify opportunities for cooperation.